/153 cont./

him with a series of magic remedies and medicinal plants which have been fully described in the article /154/ previously cited. Also at the present time it is not uncommon for them to call in the services of a white doctor, either in Uribia, the capital of the peninsula, or in the near-by cities of Venezuela, such as Maracaibo, or in the neighboring Colombian department of Magdalena.

But their culture possesses a traditional institution that answers these requirements: the shaman, whose essential activity has been fully treated in the work which we cited at the beginning of this chapter and to which we refer the reader. This institution, perhaps the most powerful in Guajiro culture, has been losing value for various reasons already studied in the article we have cited, but it still occupies an outstanding place within the social and cultural whole, to the point that when an Indian is gravely ill, his relatives think immediately of the shaman as the most advisable means of curing the sick man, as this functionary (the shaman) possesses considerable magic powers due to his having been selected by the benevolent spirits to be their intermediary in their frequent contacts with the community. For this reason, to obtain the aid of the shaman is to have in one's favor the friendship and co-operation of the well-wishing spirits who can save the patient from death, because for the Guajiro, illness is caused by the action of pernicious spirits who want to cause harm and to avenge themselves.

The first necessary condition for the shaman to take charge of the cure is the gift to him of a piece of jewelry, an ornament of gold, generally a necklace, /the value of/ which should be in relation to the family status of the patient as well as the standing of the shaman. A second condition is the tacit submission to the shaman's demands and instructions.

The shaman, once he has decided to take charge of the cure of the patient, goes to his house and submits the sick man to the customary ritual. His practices, which last several

[19 cont.]
invocations of the spirits and in the metamorphosis of the shaman."
(16) [Cited in French.] The shaman moves his torso in gyra-

16. Ibid., I, 218.

tion. When he is in trance and effecting a cure which requires the invocation of the spirit, no noise must be made as this will cause the spirit to become frightened and to flee; and being left without his protector spirit, the shaman will suffer violent fits and fall to the ground in severe convulsions. The shaman always carries a piece of manilla in these cases; he chews it and becomes intoxicated with the juice, which induces him to sing with greater verve. The juice of the manilla also serves to spray the body of the patient as well as the walls and all around the house to frighten away the malignant spirit. This custom of the magic use of tobacco is also very common in America; but to overexpand the subject we limit ourselves to giving a simple example cited by Pauly with reference to the Aroona Indians of Bolivia: "They use tobacco dust mixed with coca to cure their sick and ward off the evil spirits, chewing it and spitting the juice on the body of the sick person. They also spit it at the heavens to calm the storms and at the river when it is in flood." (17)

17. Pauly, Antonio. Ensayo de Etografía Americana. Viajes y Exploraciones [Essay on American Ethnology. Voyages and Explorations], VI, 126.

The treatment really begins with a chant of invocation to the spirits. While the ceremony is performed the shaman continually chews tobacco and he rubs the juice formed by the saliva and the juice of the plant over the body of the patient, and immediately after this, he energetically sucks several consecutive times at the affected parts of the body of the sick man to draw out [20] the malignancy. (The sickness that the native has, no matter what may be its special characteristics or from whence it may have arisen, is derived from the malevolent action of the

[20 cont.]

wanuri spirits of the dead, who have arrows similar to those used by the Indians for hunting, which are shot at individuals to cause them sickness and pain.) The chant of the shaman is suspended only while he is sucking the affected parts of the sick person's body; then he immediately continues it again and returns to the spitting, the rubbing, and the sucking of the painful areas. The sick person should be confined to his home, and furthermore his bed should be enclosed by curtains in the manner of a second room within the main one. None may enter this place without the express consent of the shaman. However, the witch sometimes permits the presence of a relative of the sick person, generally the sister or the wife, who can act as nurse, especially during the moments when the shaman is resting. When he renews his curative acts, they must withdraw again.

The songs which the shaman intones tell how his spirit is searching for the soul of the sick man which the spirit of sickness and death has carried away to unknown regions which are known only to it and to the spirit of the shaman. Often the sick person's spirit does not let itself be caught by the shaman, or it can happen that his soul is imprisoned, held by art and wish of the wanuri, which can cause the shaman a great deal of work. When through the intervention of his protector spirit he succeeds in recovering the spirit of the patient, he must pay the wanuri that held it prisoner a ransom for its liberation. This spirit will then ask through the mouth of the shaman for whatever gifts it may fancy. The shaman on his part transmits the oppressing spirit's demands to the sick man's relatives. These demands take the form of requests for animals -- cattle, goats, sheep, etc., -- of a certain color and special markings, ornaments of certain sizes and shapes, cloth, food and, at times, things very difficult to find. The sick man's relatives hurry to look everywhere for the requested items, and once found they present them to the shaman and place them, if they are animals, near him where he is "shamanizing." Other objects, such as necklaces, cloth, etc., are placed in his hands. If the orders are not immediately complied with and in accordance with the slightest detail, the shaman suffers very severe fits and attacks and has to withdraw from assisting the patient. This is because,

[31 cont.]

753 955 756 796 If the shaman's illness and the announcement of his death are provoked by the displeasure of his protector spirit, there generally is no possibility of calling in another shaman to carry out the ceremonies of curing. The illness of the shaman more than being his alone is an illness of the protector spirit. It is thus different from all other illnesses known to the natives. The shaman himself cannot help; he does not know how to apply the remedies he may have used in similar cases. He only, and this on few occasions, applies his weeze to his chest. At other times the spirit may have pity on him and may come and recommend some special remedy to him, indicating at the same time where he can obtain it. The sick shaman then takes the remedy, and his sickness is immediately alleviated.

756 796 On the death of a shaman it is obligatory to hold a wake for at least three consecutive days, because the attacks which shamans have ("states of ecstasy") are so frequent and on occasion prolonged for a considerable time, that there is the possibility that he may not be really dead. The natives, then, do not wish to give a shaman burial until they are convinced of his death. There is also the belief that when such persons die they do not follow the same cycle as other mortals, since their bodies do not become hard and stiff but remain soft and lax, as if they were only sleeping. At the conclusion of these three obligatory days of the wake, they carry him away for burial. They wash the body and loosen his shroud as they do for others. But his crown, his maracas, and all his clothes are first broken and torn and later buried in a special place in the woods, or are thrown away in a lonely place. They must not place these objects with him in his grave [32] because the spirit of the dead shaman would return, very angry with the persons who had done such a thing, and would punish their disrespect in some form or another.

796 955 753 787 The dead shaman's spirit wanders everywhere like all other spirits, it goes to the place where his body lived, to places well known to it, but it is always accompanied by its protector spirit, from which it will never become separated. Both the protector spirit and its passage may descend on a new shaman in order to assist him. This is probably the explanation of the possession of

[35 cont.]

*756 their protection to him. When he is performing the ceremonial
775 indispensable for freeing the body and soul of a patient from the clutches of the wanurú, he represents nothing but the role of intermediary between two worlds and especially between two classes of spirits -- that of his protector who wishes to save the sick person and that of others now dead who desire above all
[753] that the evil they have caused the person of the sick man should continue until it ends with his death, so that in this way they can avenge an offense received, or simply satisfy some capricious wish of their own, as beings capable -- because of their position as inhabitants of another world, a position superior to everything we can imagine in this mortal universe -- of doing any harm they wish.

755 This position of intermediary is clearly shown in the cere-
*756 mony of curing. The communication must be made through definite material objects which take on in their turn the character of untouchables: the maraca, the crown, the tamels which contain a representation of goat dung, and the tobacco or manilla, objects which cannot be used by others but only by shamans during their moments of trance or invocation; the solitude to which the curer submits himself during his invocations, with only his patient present, for fear that the protector spirit might disappear and refuse to give aid in the cure which the shaman is trying to effect; his protector spirit's demands for certain objects to satisfy the voracity of harmful spirits or its own, demands which must be complied with to the letter; the ritual chants which relate the different moments of agreement between the harmful spirits and that of the shaman; the sacrifice of an animal determined by the spirit -- male goat, sheep, etc. -- as recompense for the spirit's favors; and lastly, the expressed prohibition that rests on the shaman not to eat or use the [36] animals or objects that he receives in payment for his cures. All these are facts which clearly indicate that the shaman is no more than an intermediary or an earthly representative of the spirits of good, or even of evil, and above all of the dead shamans who wish to continue exerting their beneficial influence on the group to which they belonged in life.

971 This function of communication with the spirits, annexed
*782 to, and inseparable from, the personality of the medicine man,
987

[41 cont.]

764 1. The first of these types refers to the custom established
962 among them of sacrificing, during the wake of any member of the community, a number of animals belonging to the dead man (cows, bulls, goats, sheep), the meat of which is divided among those attending the wake along with the corresponding drink, which in these days is rum but in times past was chicha.

[767] The reason given for the sacrificing of animals during a wake in answer to the question is that this is done in deference to the guests and especially to those whom we could call "professional mourners," who spend all day and all night moaning over the corpse. But on observing certain practices and particularly certain taboos regarding the meat of these sacrificed animals, one has to think rather of the ritual character of the sacrifice.

262 It is a fact that the relatives -- sons, daughters, nephews
764 [and nieces, sobrinos], brothers [and sisters, hermanos] etc. --
963 of the deceased cannot eat the meat of animals sacrificed during
962 the wake or during the later ceremony of secondary burial, as this, according to their belief, would be equivalent to eating their dead kinsman's flesh. This taboo, imposed on the deceased's relatives, serves to prove to us -- so far as it is possible to deduce -- the ritual aspect of the sacrifice of the dead man's livestock, stock which on being slaughtered takes on the same untouchable or magical quality, which the individual takes on when he disappears from the world of the living and enters the universe of the dead. [42] To put this more plainly, the animals sacrificed are contaminated by their dead owner.

965 The untouchable quality of the animal sacrificed at the wake or in the ceremony that accompanies the second burial is supported by the following fact. The belief exists in La 843 Guajira that if during pregnancy the mother or the father of the 958 future child is present at the exhuming of a corpse, the child is born sickly, suffers from permanent diarrhea and night sweats, 955 and gets more and more pale and progressively thinner. Its 765 illness continues to get worse, and none of the familiar remedies have the desired effect. The parents then resort to the following system of curing (a system which with some variations is also common among the people of the town of Samacaca). They wait until there is an exhumation ceremony, and then

[51 cont.]

911 fear, or admiration. The primitive has not at this stage reached
913 the discernment necessary to establish the logical relation be-
18 tween phenomena and their real causes, but establishes a magic
relationship that in the majority of cases does not correspond
to any concrete or objective reality.

753 This manner of thinking and of feeling is especially re-
flected in the facts related to the individual himself and his or-
ganic reactions and, essentially, in the variations to which his
organism is susceptible in the biological or pathological sense.
To the primitive sicknesses are not ills caused by pathogenic
germs (we say this in the general sense as there are some excep-
tions) or by internal or external disorders but are the result of
the harmful actions of some being -- animal, human, mineral,
or vegetable -- who is the sick man's potential enemy or one
whom he has injured in some way or another, especially in vio-
lating the social ritual arrangements which at first were related
almost exclusively to the totem and which then gradually
evolved toward diverse forms of magic which led him to a real
investigatory curiosity.

This curiosity is not limited, as might be expected, to the
simple act of knowing what phenomenon or what individual spirit
might have caused the sickness, but sets out to understand the
whole matter in order to put into [52] practice a method of
cure -- it does not matter of what kind -- which will bring one
back to the state of health, to normality, and remove him from
contact with the dangerous world of the spirits.

753 For this reason, in the following pages we shall find our-
755 selves confronted with this phenomenon: if the causes of the sick-
758 nesses are magic or, in more general terms, supernatural, the
methods of curing applied must be of the same type. The world
of the spirits is considered to be superior to the normal world
of the living, because it is unknown or partially so. The struggle
then, face to face, of individual against spirit will be unequal
because the latter -- the spirit -- is aided by supernatural forces
with which the living are unacquainted. For this reason it is
indispensable that shamans should be called in -- the inter-
mediaries between man and spirit, or that he employ, when

[59 cont.]

lacking this support, certain practices of a magic character which place him – always respecting due proportions – on a plane of equality with the spirit or at least give him the possibility of warding off its harmful effects from him or his fellows. In the methods of healing, as will be seen as we progress in this chapter, the individual makes use, either directly or indirectly through an intermediary – the medicine man in this case, of the benevolent powers of the instrument causing the sickness, or else those of another spirit – under whatsoever materialization – as strong or stronger than the original cause of the sickness, in order to banish the illness.

The value of the Guajiro shaman, or medicine man, as a cure, as we were able to observe in Chapter II, lies in the superiority conceded to him through his constant communication with the world of the spirits, which places him, so to speak, on a plane of equality with them. Nevertheless, in the aspect of Guajiro medicine four different factors intervene, which we can define in general as follows:

1) Medicine practiced directly by the shaman through his communication with benevolent spirits.

2) Medicine by divination, dependent or independent of the shaman, which creates another social group, not so clearly defined: that of the diviner.

3) Medicine which might be called household, independent of the shaman and of the diviner, which is applied through pragmatic knowledge of the curative value of certain plants, or through the observation of particular customs related to taboo, which as we shall see later, are of a preventative type.

4) Medicine practiced by foreigners. This last factor must have its origin in ethnographic history, and it appears to us quite difficult to clarify. It deals with the medical intervention of curers from the [59] Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, whom the Guajiro consult in certain cases. These inhabitants of the Sierra belong to native groups included by Professor Rivet in the large Chibcha linguistic family (38). Our supposition of contacts between

38. Rivet, Paul. Conferencias dictadas en el Instituto Etnológico Nacional

[54 cont.]

787 But what is most interesting is that each person in La Guajira can learn the signs that determine divination according to the different methods that make this art of prophecy possible, and make use of them in order to help anyone who may ask his aid or to satisfy his own curiosity about many things he desires to know. The women are especially greatly addicted to divinatory arts [55] to find out from a distance what their absent husbands are doing or what may happen to them when they are far from home. The process is as follows: First the tobacco is lit, then a special prayer is recited asking that what is occurring, or is going to happen, be revealed. Then the woman starts to suck on the tobacco and to observe most carefully every change in the tobacco once it begins to burn. For example, if it emits sparks this means that the person about whom the divinatory enquiry is being made is going to receive money; if it opens in the middle it means that the husband is ill; and he is gravely ill if the ash goes black. Other characteristic signs show when the husband has taken another woman and when he is with her.

This circumstance, that any ordinary person can learn the known methods of foretelling the future, is one which interests us at the moment because it appertains to the aspect of medicine we are investigating. These diviners, usually women, are the ones who, in these cases, decide what kind of illness [765 is attacking the patient — a child — and how it was contracted, 853] (generally by direct contamination through the mother during her pregnancy from an animal that had touched food eaten by her). By the same token, they decide what curing methods must be followed to free the patient from the illness from which he suffers.

To clarify this point we quote several pertinent examples taken from our field notes.

753 It is said in Nazaret, and it is a belief extensively ac-
825 cepted all over the peninsula, that a bird called soche, which is accustomed to withdraw to the Sierra de Macuira during its hours of sleep, is harmful to the native inhabitants when it flies over their homes, as it is a carrier of bronchitis, which it spills on to the roofs of their houses, from whence the children of the home pick up the contagion and die.

G [55 cont.]

755 When the child at birth, or a few days afterward, is afflicted with stomach-ache and other characteristic symptoms determined by divination, the cause is that the mother during her pregnancy had imprudently eaten a watermelon which previously had been tasted by a fox. This fact having been proved by the art and talent of the diviner, she proceeds to carry out the cure of the infant, which consists of searching out a fox, killing and quartering it, separating the bones from the flesh and burning them and reducing them to powder. The powder resulting from this calcination is used to anoint around the child's anal sphincter after an evacuation. A part of the meat of the dead animal is roasted and is given [56] to the sick child. If both remedies are applied at the opportune moment, the child will rapidly recover - at least this is the Guajiro belief.

G . It might be thought that in this case it would be logical
● 753 for the affected person to be the mother herself, as it was she
854 who ate the contaminated fruit, but one must bear in mind that to the primitive, the infant, as with us, is a relatively defenseless being. For this reason he requires greater protection, because evil things, due to his weak defenses, will readily make a prey of his small body. The evil things in this case are represented by the wicked spirits whose object is to spread sickness. To uphold our statement it is sufficient to quote the case of the
W Witoto Indians, inhabitants of the Amazonian selva, with their
846 social institution called the covada [couvade] and their general custom of covering their children's bodies with curly vegetable fibers to disguise them and give them the appearance of small monkeys. Let us see what couvade is: "The one most concerned with this affair" - the birth of the new child - "is the husband because it is he who has to bear the rigors of the strict diet involved. In practice, once natus est homo and the essential obstetrical duties are carried out, the Indian mother hands over the fruit of her womb to the husband. He takes charge of the infant and, acting as if he were the mother, takes it with him to his hammock where he stays for eight days, keeping to a diet which might well be adopted by the most fastidious lady. But before he does this he first of all puts on mourning, that is, he paints himself

[57 cont.]

W 854 291 a wooly substance from another tree which is very similar to the balso. So dressed, the infant Indian, lifted onto the bare shoulders of its mother or clinging to her knees, appears in reality very like a small monkey. With only this savage dress, these Indians are quite happy." ... (40)

40. Anon. Op. cit., 2d, I, 37.

W 854 The missionary is right when he compares these children to small monkeys. The idea of dressing the child in so peculiar a costume is not just to protect him from the vagaries of the climate, or to dress him with greater or lesser aesthetic taste, but to safeguard him from evil spirits by means of this disguise, which constitutes a veritable transformation of his physical personality. The child on being dressed up in this extraordinary covering is really changed into another being, so that the evils he might attract to himself lose their effectiveness since the spirits are deceived by the substitution that has been made.

G 755 A method of curing very similar to that we have just described is the one used when a newborn child shows signs of intestinal trouble and diarrhea, evacuating something like spittle. The woman who is acting as diviner discovers by her art that the sickness attacking the infant is due to its mother G [753] having allowed a duck to eat part of her food. For this reason the child passes its fecal matter in a way similar to that of a duck. How does one proceed, then, to restore the infant to health? The feathers around the anus of the duck are plucked out, burned, and the ashes are reduced to powder. As soon as the infant's bowels have moved, his mother must clean him carefully and then apply the powder of the ashes of the feathers around his anal sphincter. If the diviner's diagnosis has been correct, the child should recover quickly on the application of the prescribed remedy. [58]

G [843] 753 755 If during her pregnancy the mother should eat fruit which has been previously pecked at by any kind of bird, the child on being born will have stomach trouble and his excrement will be similar to that of the bird. The Indian women who are

[58 cont.]

755 expert in these sicknesses and who devote themselves to applying the remedies and divining the causes of such illnesses indicate by what bird the fruit which the mother ate was contaminated. Once the origin of the sickness has been determined, they proceed to carry out the method of cure which entails hunting and capturing the bird responsible, which, once killed, is roasted, and the meat fed to the child. A sancocho [stew] is also prepared, using portions of the bird, a good part of which is fed to the child. With this medicine the infant should be quickly cured. If this does not effect a cure, the divination has been incorrectly made, and it was not that kind of bird that pecked at the fruit eaten by the mother during her pregnancy. The whole process must therefore be done over again to discover with absolute certainty what animal caused the child's sickness.

843 If a pregnant woman should eat the meat of a hen that has been killed by a sparrow hawk, the child will be born sickly, his 753 excretions will be green, and his crying will be like the cry of a hawk. When they do not know the origin of the sickness, they 755 apply home remedies or those of any local curer [curandero]. If [757] these do not bring about the desired effect, then they must turn to divination. The diviner will decide that the mother ate the flesh of a chicken that had been killed by a sparrow hawk. The curing method will follow a similar process to that previously noted: a hawk is found and killed; a leg of the creature is taken, and the bone is well cleaned and allowed to dry. When it is sufficiently dry it is boiled, and the child's body bathed with the resulting infusion.

262 The meat of such a hen -- contaminated by the hawk 825 which had eaten some of it -- is also harmful to children in 842 general, boys and girls, and also adults. Every time it is eaten 838 it causes sterility. For this reason the magic taboo on this meat is lifted only for the old and the very aged who have already lost their procreative powers and in consequence have nothing to fear in this respect.

766 Household medicine. This system of medicine, which, as we have said, is independent of shamans and diviners, is based above all on the practice of certain magic practices directly

[58 cont.]

755 associated with some prohibitions of a taboo nature or with established social customs, the origin and in part even significance of which is unknown. But what attracts our attention in this aspect of Guajiro medical [sic] practice is preventative rather than curative nature. To demonstrate this, we quote some examples:

●753 During the period of pregnancy, neither the father nor the
755 mother should be present at the exhumation of the dead, a cere-
843 mony which the Indians hold to comply with the rites of the secondary burial. If this injunction is disobeyed, the infant about to be born will, at birth or a few days later, have a sickly appearance and will be afflicted with constant diarrhea and night sweats, and will be characterized by a very pronounced paleness and extreme thinness.

755 If this occurs, if through carelessness the parents witness the exhumation of a corpse during the mother's pregnancy and her child is born sickly, they will not try to blame the child's illness on any other cause than that just stated. In accordance with this decision, they will proceed to apply the curing method appropriate for such an emergency, which, as we noted in the previous chapter, "Magic and Sacrifice," is as follows: (a) They wait until there is a fiesta of a ceremonial nature for the exhumation of human remains and then place the infant inside the recently opened body of the animal that has been sacrificed for the ceremony. (b) If the infant cannot be taken to the place where the ceremony is being held, a bone of the sacrificed animal is taken, left to dry, and cooked, and the infant is bathed in this water. (c) If there is no possibility of a ceremony of the type described being held in the near future, a hole is made in the sand, and the child is buried therein up to its neck and is then covered with the loose earth.

843 Neither should the husband of a pregnant woman under any
845 circumstances dig a grave or assist in the construction of a vault
764 (an element of acculturation) destined for the primary or secon-
[77] dary burial of any person. If he does his wife will suffer the consequences of this disrespect in her delivery, which will not be normal: prolonged for several days, very painful, and with serious consequences for the mother and for the coming child.

[59 cont.]

893 A pregnant woman should never be present at or watch a
845 burial, for if she does so, she will have a difficult childbirth:
the infant's arrival will be delayed in a manner both painful
and difficult for the mother.

855 Anyone who may have touched the corpse of a person
758 whose death has not been natural -- who has been murdered,
784 for example -- is prohibited from approaching the side of one
who is sick, because this individual will die because of his
presence. This prohibition is also extended to those who have
directly assisted in the exhumation of human remains. Further-
more, both of those persons are strictly forbidden to come near
[753] children [60] or places where they may be, because their pres-
ence, contaminated by the nature of the dead, will cause the
children to fall ill.

893 Serpents also have magic influence on pregnant women.
825 In this case it is not an influence destined to injure the unborn
child but is directed against the mother herself, who feels in
various ways in her own flesh the malignant action of the
reptile. For instance, if a woman during her term of pregnancy
sees a hunting snake [culebra cazadora] and remains looking at
it for some time, her child will be born stupid. The explana-
tion that the Indians give for this very generally accepted belief
is that as this snake gives the impression of being stupid, be-
cause it does not attack people as other snakes do and does
them no harm but confines itself to hunting young birds for food,
it transmits this quality to the infant. A mother who encounters
such a reptile should pretend not to have seen it and automati-
cally look elsewhere.

825 If during this same period the mother-to-be should see
843 any kind of snake (other than a hunting snake) she will suffer a
845 miscarriage or some kind of painful mishap related to the de-
livery. To avoid these possible ills, the woman should try to
step over the snake. If in spite of this difficulties in childbirth
occur, then they resort to a curing method which consists in
finding a similar snake, killing it, opening it up carefully, and
localizing in the interior of its intestines the water that it has
drunk, collecting this and taking it to the sick woman, so that
after she has drunk it, her labor will be hastened and will then
occur without any serious complications.

[65 cont.]

and very carefully wash it [in water]. Giving the woman this water to drink will permit her to deliver the child immediately.

If a Goajiro father has to set off on a long journey on horseback, leaving behind his newborn son, he must comply with another custom of a magic nature, which requires him to wrap the cinch of his horse about the child for a few minutes. If he fails to do this, the child will be very ill and complain pitifully during the time his father is absent. An equivalent form under the same circumstances is the father's customarily placing his foot on the newborn baby's chest for a brief moment. If this obligation is not complied with, either through forgetfulness or all will on the part of the father, the mother, or some close relative of the child, must find the father's old sandals and place them on the child's chest for a few moments in order to obtain the effect desired, which the ritual action if performed by the father would have accomplished.

We venture to attempt an explanation of the last two phenomena as follows: The object that is sought in the fulfillment of these two traditional customs is to drive away from the child the presence of the wanuri or the evil spirit of sickness. The pressure exercised by the father's foot or, lacking this, [66] by the father's old sandals, symbolizes his presence in the child precisely in the place where the spirits in order to attain their evil designs often lodge in the child's body, i.e., its chest, as we shall have occasion to see in the following chapter. This symbolic presence of the father prevents the spirits from approaching near the child to work it harm. Lastly, the custom of wrapping the cinch of [the harness of] the horse on which the father will be traveling around the body of the child is intimately linked with the belief of these natives that the horse has the power to frighten away the wanuri, or spirit of sickness, with its snorting; more simply this same protection is achieved by placing a horse's skull in a place near the houses. (Cf. "Amulets, Fetishes, Talismans." Also, in this case there is a substitution of the magic formula (using the cinch instead of the horse), a substitution that has exactly similar effects and the action of which could be based on one of the laws of magic established by Sir J. G. Frazer

[73] In the Guajiro mentality sickness, as we were able to see in the corresponding sections ("Medicine and Sickness" and "Life Cycle of the Shaman"), is not something provoked by natural causes but is the consequence of the malevolent action of some special being, above all, of a spirit. So a series of beliefs, magic preventatives, have been established in order to avoid or ward off the hostile action of these spirits on the individual, as we were able to note in the chapter "Sickness and Medicine." We also saw in the matter relating to magic and sickness how certain animals, plants, and objects could be agents by contamination or participation in the cause and development of sickness. But it is particularly the spirit of the dead, offended and malevolent, that causes major disasters among the Guajiro, as is shown by their beliefs and their own preventative systems.

We can get aid from linguistics to clarify this concept. The word that the Guajiro uses for illness in general is wanurú, and the same word is the one that is used for the spirit of the dead – the devil, according to all writers and even to the natives themselves, due to the effects of religious acculturation provoked by the Capuchin fathers. Still further, if we break down the word we find that it is formed of three special particles, wa, num ru, which separately correspond to three different concepts: Wa is derived from the first person plural of the personal pronoun wayú, which means "we"; nu, or simply n, is nothing more than the general contraction of the third person singular of the personal pronoun niú, "he," and rú is a relative particle derived from surú or hurú (s or h according to which dialectal zone the word is taken from), which signifies "inside," "inside of," or "within." In view of the idiomatic composition of the Guajiro dialect, we can with all safety translate the word wanurú as follows: "he, inside of us." The linguistic construction therefore corresponds to a social reality: sickness, wanurú, is nothing more than that: the spirit of the dead that has entered an individual in order to cause him a particular illness for some disrespect or other that he has shown toward the spirit, or simply just because it is a malignant and vindictive spirit.

The relation sickness – death – spirit, which will later be the object of a special study on our part, can be proved through linguistics in many of the aboriginal Colombian and even American

2: Pineda Giraldo--85 E-6 (1947) 1950 SC13 Goajiro SC13

[73 cont.]

groups, as far as we have been able to discover personally or by bibliographical inquiry. To give no more than a small sample of this, let us see [74] two quotations which corroborate our previous statement, but for clarity before doing this we have to recall a little about the place of the magician, sorcerer, medicine man, or shaman in aboriginal communities as an intermediary between two worlds, or as the sole means of communication with the spirits through which he successfully obtains his magic effects. This clarification is necessary because on many occasions the word used for sickness or death might be confused with the word used for shaman, or medicine man, for this very condition.

For example, Mother Laura, referring to the Katío [Catio] Indians (51) says: "Among the many peculiarities which study

51. The Katío Indians belong linguistically and culturally to the Chokó group of the Karib [Carib] linguistic family (Rivet, op. cit.). They lived and still live in a great part of the northeast of Antioquia department in the republic of Colombia.

of the customs, usages, and beliefs of the Catío tribe reveals, the most noticeable is jaibanism.

"The etymology of the word jaibaní is as follows: jai = sickness, pana = gathering (derived from capaní, flock or herd). Consequently, this word may be translated: a collection or gathering of sicknesses. The general acceptance is "doctor." (52)

52. Montoya, Laura (Rev. Mother). Nociones sobre usos y costumbres de los Catíos en el departamento de Antioquia [Notes on Usages and Customs of the Catío Indians in the Department of Antioquia], p. 148.

This word jaibaní to which Mother Laura refers corresponds to what ethnographically we might denominate medicine man as

[81 cont.]

individual is not capable of distinguishing between the merely fictitious, the imaginary and the real. To him, the image so faithfully rebuilt in his imagination is as real as the living image of the deceased. The explanation of the phenomenon, then, according to his mentality, is that the dead man has appeared before him for some reason or other.

This fact is complicated in addition by the belief that every dead person "retraces his steps," that is, he treads again all the paths he traveled during his life; he returns to places where he had been at different times; this is why he is "felt" very often. Many times the individual feels the presence of the dead, even if he does not see it. This Guajiro belief is also found to be very prevalent in all Colombian folklore. The phenomenon that the Colombian people call "retracing his steps" corresponds exactly to the Guajiro version which we have just transcribed. Of course, according to popular legends, the dead "retrace their steps" when they are dying or a few moments or even days before their death. To hear strange noises without apparent logical explanation, to see shadows, etc., are for the people evident signs that one of their relatives or friends, or even some person who in the past has lived in these parts, is dying or will die from one moment to the next. For the same reason they avoid walking alone along certain places when they know that someone who has lived there is close to death's door.

Degrees of danger in spirits. The Guajiro murderer suffers a double punishment; first, the claim for compensation payment for blood presented by the dead man's relatives, which involves his own death if he does not pay the sum agreed on; and second, the constant presence of the dead man's spirit, which never leaves him. For this reason, the murderer cannot enter a home where there are small children because the spirit of the dead man follows him, will climb over them, squeeze them, and make them cry. If the children are sick, the murderer's presence is even more dangerous because the spirit will rapidly cause their death. If they are well they usually become ill. [82]

The death of a fellow being becomes a tremendous obsession with the Guajiro; the murderer is convinced that the dead man's spirit follows him everywhere. When he is ill he has

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[95 cont.]

682 775 853 nightmares and dreams, possibly in the delirium of fever, so that the spirit creeps around him and painfully crushes his chest. It pursues him insistently, which provokes a grave crisis in illness. The spirit then takes advantage of his weak state to aggravate his sickness. Self-confession is one of the most important social consequences of this state of mind as, due to the obsession 682 626 with the presence of the spirit, every time a murderer has been able to conceal the secret of the murder and in consequence has so far escaped the compensation payment for blood, he loses his equanimity during sickness and will then talk freely about his crime. In the delirium of fever, haunted by the anguish caused by the supposed weight of the spirit of the murdered man on his chest, he raves about all the details of his crime. This confession, according to his belief, does bring him some relief as in a certain manner it admits the dead man's vengeance and in consequence it gives some peace to the criminal as well as rest to the offended spirit.

775 The spirits of those who have died violent deaths fall, so to speak, within a class of more highly dangerous spirits than those that die from natural causes. They represent, we should say, the middle point between these latter spirits and those of suicides. This is certain to such a point that the house in which [964] a native has been killed is immediately vacated, because his spirit will live in that house and it will only leave it on occasions when it goes to torment the murderer. A Guajiro Indian will never pass by the place between sunset and dawn because he is convinced that every detail of the scene of the tragedy is continually being repeated in that place ; the insults are heard again, the shots or whir of arrows, the sighs and groans of agony, just as were heard on the day of the tragedy. In addition the spirit appears in the shape of a flame that pursues whoever may be near the house; or it may also appear in the form of any animal whatsoever, a bird, for example.

But the highest degree of danger occurs when the spirit of the murdered Indian is face to face with his murderer. This is a wounded spirit and full of desire for vengeance to such a point that the family of the murderer, after having fulfilled the

[97 cont.]

greater protection than the adult as, owing to his limited defensive capacity, illnesses can readily take possession of his body. We made reference in that section to the malevolent action of certain animals as well as the influence of the dead, the contamination exercised by their spirit on conception and on small children. And now we return to refer especially to this last aspect. We also saw how the harmful effects of animals centered especially on unborn infants due to carelessness on the part of pregnant mothers or of the husbands, and this is repeated equally with regard to funerals.

When the grave destined for a dead person is opened, small children who go to the funeral, relatives of the deceased, must pass in file over it with the object that death will be delayed and will not overcome them while very young.

When speaking of sacrifice (cf. Chapter III) as well as when speaking of medicine among the Guajiro Indians in its magic aspect, we quoted the general belief in La Guajira, which is known also as an aspect of folklore in various parts of Colombia, among them Santander and Nariño, that if during pregnancy, the father or the mother of the child to be born has been present at the exhumation of any human remains, the child will be born sickly, will suffer from diarrhea, night sweating, paleness, and loss of weight. The characteristic of something touched by death which the corpse has makes it contagious and, so to speak, contaminates the mother of the infant, who because of his weakness is incapable of resisting its influence. If in this case one considers the folklore aspect, the explanation which is given is that the cold of death has affected the child through the person of its mother or its father in the presence of the corpse. The explanation in the case of Guajiro appears to us to be somewhat more complicated, as we had occasion to show above, although the curing process tend in reality to extract the cold of death from the body of the child after it is born. The method of curing considered infallible by them is to bury the child in the still warm carcass of an animal sacrificed [88] during a wake, and only when there is no such possibility do they make use of the substitute, the bone, or of burying

[88 cont.]

755 the child in the warm sand, covering it to the base of its head. There is a decided magic intervention, the effect of which we 782 do not know on the part of the sacrificed animal which, as we 825 have said, shares the contaminating quality of its dead owner.

Other beliefs which confirm what has been stated are the 843 following: The husband of a pregnant woman should never, for 845 any motive whatsoever, dig a grave or assist in the construction of a vault for either a primary or secondary burial ceremony, because in such a case his wife's delivery will not be normal; it will be prolonged with danger both to the mother and the child.

Neither should the mother-to-be watch a burial being placed in a vault because the previously mentioned phenomenon will be repeated: She will have a difficult delivery, through delay in the birth and pain.

783 Anyone who has touched a man whose death was not due
● 753 to natural causes must not come near a sick person because if
764 he does the sick man will quickly die. This also applies to those who have helped in an exhumation or taken part in any of the ceremonies called for by the secondary burial. Neither should such a person go near small children because these will, according to Guajiro belief, automatically begin to cry and twist about, the victims of some sickness.

In general terms, the individual who approaches a corpse, who touches it, or who participates directly in the different ceremonies relating to it becomes contaminated. But he does not suffer the consequences of this contamination in his own person, unless it be a pregnant woman; he takes on the role of transmitting agent. He becomes an intermediary, if we can so call him, between the spirit and children, sick people, or pregnant women, which are the three classes of people preferred by the spirits of the dead on whom to practice their malevolent contaminations. In all three cases the weakness of the contaminated person is evident: the sick person, the child in the womb unable to defend itself, and the newborn also incapable of defending itself against the spirit as it shows in contrast to the other members of the community, that is, the adults on whom it depends for its

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[88 cont.]

753 subsistence and in general for every aspect of its life.

764 The relation spirit-sickness-death, which we have re-

783 ferred to in previous sections, is corroborated by this class of beings exposed to the harmful influence of the spirits almost in the same sense as that in which science regards sickness, i.e., the greater the weakness the greater the possibility of contamination from pathogenic germs. In short, [89] death occurs more frequently among old people and children than among adults. It is only that pathogenic germs, or the various causes of sickness among the Guajiro, are reduced, due to their mentality and in the majority of cases, to one cause only, wanuré, the spirit of sickness and death.

[p. 90 is blank]

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[91] VI

Magic Charms
(Fetishes, Amulets, and Talismans)

789 As these three terms, fetish, amulet, and talisman generally lend themselves to confusion, we wish to clarify the meaning of each one before we proceed further with the subject.

Amulet "indicates an object that possesses the magic, passive quality of defending the wearer from malignant influences..." (56)

56. Castiglioni. Op. cit., VI, 87.

Fetish derives from the Portuguese feitiço, corresponding to the Latin word facticius ("made by hand"), and at first was used to describe Christian amulets, but was used by navigators in the fifteenth century to describe the primitively carved wood and stone which were worshiped as bearers of magic forces by the Negroes of West Africa. The fetish "is an efficacious charm whose supposed action is guided by the wish of its owner." (57)

57. Born. Op. cit., 2-3.

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[111 cont.]

787 425 Someone must know about these happenings and will communicate them at the proper time. From this they derive their belief in the announcement of coming events, which they interpret by associations related to certain animals in certain circumstances.

For example, the bird which we call the woodpecker announces to the wayfarer by its song that in the place that he is going to a misfortune will occur, there will be a drunken brawl, or simply that evil spirits live there.

We have already seen the malevolent action of the nocturnal bird which appears frequently in Nazaret and sleeps in the [153] Sierra de Jarara. The Indians say that it flies over the houses during the night and in its droppings spreads the germs of bronchitis which are absorbed by children who contract the illness and die.

There is also a bird known in the peninsula named cucarachero ["cockroach bird"] – different from the one in the interior of the same name – which wanders over the roofs of houses searching for beetles, scorpions, and small lizards, etc. It makes its nest in trees near houses and frequently sings [112] when it is brooding or raising its young. It is known in La Guajira by the name of waimpirai. This bird and the one called uteté announce by their song when visitors will be coming to the house. The belief exists that these two birds hurry those who are on a journey and counsel them to be speedy so that no misfortune may befall them en route.

Another bird, the one popularly known by the name of alcaraván [bittern] and in Guajiro by that of karré, likes to walk about near the native houses and to go inside them. If at nightfall it should be going about in the vicinity of the houses, the Indians believe it announces the death of someone in the family. The natives' fear of this bird becomes acute when it is not content to move around the house or go inside, but goes into the cooking area and approaches the hearth, because in this case death will very soon carry off one of the members of that home. The creature suffers the consequences of the natives' fear since they drive it from the house with stones and blows.

[143 cont.]

seems to be true, in a certain way, for those who are imbued with Christian religious practices, because when they refer to our God, to Jesus Christ, they call him Mareiwa. But at the bottom of their minds, in our opinion, there is some distinction which is precisely what we shall try to explain.

When we spoke of the shaman, we referred extensively to his protector spirits, the real healers of sickness, of whom the shaman is no more than an intermediary. Naturally, we also spoke, in that chapter and in the one relating to sickness, of the evil spirits, the malignant ones, the cause of the trouble, known by the generic name of wanurú, and we explained how the first are, in general, the spirits of dead shamans who have disappeared but continue to exercise their functions for the benefit of the community, while the wanurú are also spirits of dead people who satisfy their personal vengeances, revenge themselves for disrespect shown them in their status after death, or are simply dangerous because of the circumstances of their death, as in the case of suicides. [144]

In addition to the spirits of sickness and death, there is another named yo-ru-jú, difficult to describe and whose functions are difficult to delineate. We only know that he is magnificently malevolent and that it is he, the complete opposite of Mareiwa (God) that has been named "demon" or "devil" by missionaries, writers, etc.

Regarding the previous statement, we have several quotations that confirm it: "Yoluhú is the demon in the simple Guajiro theogony. As with god, it is scarcely a concept, a word that represents the forces of destruction and, at the same time, of power, since it is even used by the shaman when he is foretelling the future. "What does the devil say (Jamüsenelk Yoluj)?" is the question the diviner asks. The Guajiro demon is not, therefore, like the Christian devil, the opposite of God, because in addition to wickedness and destruction it also embraces the concept of power and divination." (75)

75. Hernández de Alba. Op. cit., 50.

[164 cont.]

"It seems that for the Guajiro there may exist two devils, one called Yawjá or Yolujá and the other the Guamurú. The Yawjá, or devil properly speaking, is the most evil that exists and the most frightful. He is always evil and exercises his actions on man, on humanity, but he acts mainly not through himself but through another and minor devil, which is Guamurú.

"The Guamurú is more involved in worldly affairs; he is the enemy of the body as well as the soul. He is charged with producing sicknesses in people, in animals, even in plants. The Guamurú is also a spirit." (76)

76. Barranquilla. Op. cit., II, 67.

As we see the confusion is great, and it is not all due to the writings of the authors above quoted but also to the natives themselves, as we shall see below.

What may be deduced at present is the establishment of two categories of spirits, one for those of good, the other for those of evil, categories based on their greater or lesser capacity to exercise benign or malignant influences respectively. But if we examine a little more carefully the series of facts observed by us in our journey in 1947, we are able to note some further differences which will enable us to explain somewhat better the problem that appertains to the ideas of good and evil in the native's mind. These differences arise from the presence of beings which have character, which are disposed to exercise good or evil on the individual or on the community in general, that is, benign or evil spirits that personify [165] good and evil and that preside over actions socially acceptable or reprehensible.

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Mareiwa. In our opinion, Mareiwa is above all the propitiatory spirit of the rains. This statement is based on the following facts:

1. The Dance of the Kid, as we saw in the previous chapter, is dedicated to him and takes place when the summer rains appear.

[147 cont.]

775 and plants either individually, or collectively with the appearance of epidemics; spiritually by inspiring reprehensible actions such as murder, which brings social misfortunes in its wake. In general, all the transgressions of the Guajiro social law — rage, suicide, infidelity, etc. — are inspired by this spirit.

2. They have permanent sites of habitation, especially in unoccupied houses.

3. They are grouped into special categories dependent on the circumstances of their death, which influences their manner of life in the next world.

4. They make their appearance by adopting special [774] bodies, that is, they make themselves visible. In this they differ fundamentally from the spirits of good, like Maraiwa, who manifests himself in no bodily form. In this connection [148] we have the following native belief: If during the night 775 or in the late hours of the afternoon, a sizeable, nocturnal white 825 moth is found in the bedroom, it must not be mistreated or killed. It must be treated with consideration because it is nothing but the spirit of some ancestor — wanurú — who has come on a visit. If it becomes very troublesome and keeps one awake by its fluttering, it must be got out of the room very carefully. [782] If it should be killed, the spirit of the dead incarnated in it would appear in dreams and exclaim: "Why did you kill me? I like you and for that reason I came to visit your home. You have done me harm." And most certainly the spirit would take vengeance in some bad way or another on the person who had violated the rules of hospitality due the spirits of the dead.

775 Yorujá. The concept of Yorujá is more difficult to clarify. He seems to be the same as the wanurú for the following reasons:

1. The natives when they refer to him give one to understand that he is the spirit of the dead.

2. As with the wanurú, he has his sites of fixed habitation, especially in cemeteries, in the crevices of Cabo de la Vela, or hidden in the boughs of trees in the lonely woods of Emejuy in Lower La Guajira.

[753] 3. Also, as with the wanurú, he is the cause of both physical and spiritual harm to the natives and to the community in general.

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must be no intimate association with women, not even with a wife! 756 757

The spirit has not merely accepted the novice as a piache, but has entered into him, possessed him and will accompany him during all his magical seances. As a person a piache is of no importance, but when the mighty spirit fills him he becomes the equal of the real spirits. He cures the sick exclusively by supernatural means, with the help of the spirits. Of real medicine he knows nothing. According to the Indians' ideas there are no natural causes of illness and death, which are ascribed entirely to dangerous spirits. [833] [755] [153]

When a piache is summoned to cure a sick person, he must be given a gold necklace or some other valuable gift. He brings with him two maraca rattles, the usual magical instrument of the South American Indians, and a stool shaped like an animal. If necessary, he can sit on some other stool. One of his magical instruments is small pellets made by someone with a great knowledge of herbs and formed like goat's excrement, which are intended to attract the spirits.

While the piache is in his trance everyone must remain silent, otherwise the spirit may take fright and leave the piache's body, at which he will fall to the ground in convulsions and be ill. The piache chews tobacco all the time, and with the resultant magical saliva he smears his patient's body and often the walls and roof of the hut as well. He sings a song, invoking the spirit and sucks the parts of his patient's body that hurt, thereby drawing out the cause of the illness: poisoned spirit arrows that have been shot at the sick person's body. [755]

Usually the piache is alone with his patient, but sometimes he will allow a near relative to be present and help. The songs the piache sings are about how his own spirit is seeking everywhere for the patient's. The demon of the illness has gone off with it and holds it prisoner. When the demon is found, it is forced to release the patient's spirit against a ransom. For this the piache demands cattle, goats or sheep with special markings or ornaments, cloaks, etc.

7:Bollaert T-S (1920, 1955) 1957
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accuse an animal of spreading the disease. A certain bird is considered dangerous, spreading, as it flies over the hut, bronchitis and coughs, which in the first place attack the children. A child's illness is often ascribed to something that happened to the mother during pregnancy. If a child gets a pain in its stomach, the wise woman may say that this is because a spirit ate some of the mother's food before the child was born. To deal with this, duck feathers are burned and the child's behind smeared with ash. In other circumstances it is because a fox has nosed at something the mother subsequently ate. In that case a fox has to be killed and the child given some of its grilled meat, at the same time as the child's behind is rubbed with burned fox-bone. The child will get quite better—if the old woman is right and it was a fox. These women are quacks even in the Indians' eyes, and yet they turn to them first.

If an animal is sick, the piache himself is at once sent for. The cattle are driven into an enclosure and the piache dances round and among them, wearing his head-dress, torso bare, and brandishing his maraca, singing song-spells and spitting tobacco juice upon the animals. After some days of this, the treatment is concluded with a chichamaya dance.

The Guajiro, of course, believe in dreams. During sleep the spirit frees itself and learns things of which it knows nothing while the individual is awake. Because of this it is considered risky to neglect warnings or things of which one has dreamed.

A piache attaches special importance to his dream-experiences and knows how to interpret them. If he dreams that a snake bites someone, it means that that person will be struck by a poisoned arrow. If he sees fire in his dream, that indicates fever, while violent rain denotes the death of some rich Indian. Blood in a dream also means death, and an animal being butchered means that a person of the same age or sex will die. If the piache dreams that an enemy intends to kill a specific individual, he hastens to visit the person to help him. An animal of a certain colour is killed and the threatened individual smeared with its blood—